

Weekly National Intelligencer.

WASHINGTON: THURSDAY, JULY 21, 1864

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By GALE & SEATON.

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THE LATE NATIONAL HUMILIATION.

The Valley of the Shenandoah has more than once been the valley of our national humiliation. After more than three years of gigantic war, our military administration has not learned to apprehend the relation of this valley to the defense of Washington, and the enemy, safely presuming on the ignorance and shiffliness of that administration, has learned to practise in this quarter a wearisome monotony of movement which only serves to show that he deems it safe at any time to hope for success by counting on our official stolidity as a standing substitute for his poverty of invention.

Talleyrand was wont to say that it is always better to rely on the folly of your antagonist than on your own sagacity, and it is certain that the enemy, in the use he periodically makes of the Valley of the Shenandoah, has shown his own sagacity in not presuming always on our official want of that quality in the conduct of the war. Physical geography has ordained that the occlusion, or at least the vigilant observation, of this side approach to the city of Washington, shall be a prime element in any campaign which, starting from Washington, has the city of Richmond for its objective point. And yet, with a want of foresight which, in the absence of all conceivable motive for the wilful betrayal of a grave public trust, confounds the reason of ordinary mortals by its magnitude and by its inveteracy, our military authorities have for four successive summers permitted this valley to be used by the enemy at his pleasure for the purpose of bringing confusion on the well-laid plans of all our Generals operating against Richmond. Whether it be at one time from failing to station in this valley a capable commanding officer; or at another from not retaining a sufficient force under his command; or at still another from not occupying the proper points of observation to deny the approach of danger in time to guard against positive mischief; or whether, as at some times, it be from committing all these blunders at once, certain it is that the military administration, in giving the country much sad experience of inefficiency, has no where made that inefficiency more egregious and deplorable than in this quarter.

The first battle of Bull Run was turned from victory into disaster by the failure of Gen. Patterson to prevent the junction of Gen. Jos. E. Johnston, through this valley, with Gen. Beauregard in the very crisis of that conflict—a failure which, whether resulting from the incompetency of Gen. Patterson, as some charge, or from the inadequacy of his aggressive force, as others represent, is one of which the responsibility must equally rest on the central power which appoints our commanders and directs the operations of the war.

The campaign of Gen. McClellan was arrested and frustrated by the incursion of Gen. Jackson into this valley in the latter part of May, 1862, compelling the abrupt retreat of Gen. Banks, throwing our military authorities here into a most abject panic, and preventing the contemplated junction of Gen. McDowell with Gen. McClellan by the Fredericksburg railroad—he being diverted from this line of march to engage in what he knew to be the impossible chase of Jackson; and Jackson, in the mean time, after distracting all our combinations, succeeded in hurling his whole column against Gen. McClellan's forces around Richmond at the very moment when our military authorities, relying on the reports of Gen. Fremont after the battle of Cross Keys on the 8th of June, supposed him still to be detained in the valley by the threatening presence of that officer.

Then came the brief campaign of Gen. Pope, in which, after having his flank repeatedly turned and his communications with Washington broken by an attack in his rear, he was badly repulsed, and driven into the defenses of Washington, while the enemy, with leisurely composure, turned from the pursuit of his broken and mishandled forces to proceed through this same valley, and make the formidable incursion into Maryland which was repelled by Gen. McClellan in the battle of Antietam on the 17th of September, 1862.

We need not pause to describe the disgraceful events which preceded the occupation of Winchester by the enemy at this time, or which attended the surrender of Harper's Ferry—results all due to the incapacity which placed incompetent officers in important positions; and which, in the case of Harper's Ferry, was made doubly conspicuous on this occasion by the retention of Col. Miles at that post, under orders from Gen. Halleck, after the military availability of the position was entirely neutralized by the turn which events had taken. Official incapacity in Washington thus combined with military incompetency at the post to erect anew at the entrance of this valley the Candine forks of an unspokeable humiliation, which largely modified the exultation justly produced by the victory of Antietam, and which, in all generous minds, was intensified by the attempt to throw on Gen. McClellan the responsibility for the untoward events which he had the sagacity to foresee, but not the power to prevent after his advice in the premises had been contemned by the General-in-Chief.

And next, in the summer of 1863, more than a month after the disaster of Chancellorsville under Gen. Hooker, the Confederate commander proceeded to project a new invasion of the North, via this same valley of the Shenandoah. From a failure on the part of our military authorities to occupy in this quarter the proper points of observation, and from their failure to place in the positions actually occupied the requisite military talent and skill, the country was again called to blush at the disgraceful stampede of Milroy which preceded the disruption of the enemy into Maryland. Winchester was evacuated with John Gilpin speed; and eighteen field-pieces, 5,500 muskets, and a large quantity of ammunition were left behind by the fugitives—a valuable gift to the invading enemy.

After such repeated experience of the military relations held by this valley to the safety of Washington and to the success of impending operations against Richmond, it might have been supposed that military directors with as little perspicacity as ours have shown themselves to possess, would not for the fourth time permit mismanagement in this valley to lay a stone of stumbling and rock of offence in the way of the campaign. And yet the illustration we have just had of the want of forecast which has been signified by the conduct of the war in this quarter surpasses in its proportions any thing we have yet been called to witness. Let us analyze the elements of the invasion which has just ended in the raising of "the siege of Washington."

It is obvious to the most unimpaired mind that in order to guard the side approach to Washington via the Shenandoah Valley, a post of observation should be selected at such a point in or near the valley as shall enable the force which occupies it to discern the approach of danger in time to guard against the descent of the blow and to calculate its probable weight wherever it may fall. Before starting out on the campaign against Richmond in the spring of 1862 Gen. McClellan was careful to take precautions on this score. Under date of March 16th, in that year, he wrote to Gen. Banks (who had been selected to watch the valley) as follows:

"Your first care will be the rebuilding of the railway from Washington to Manassas and to Strasburg, in order to open your communications with the valley of the Shenandoah. As soon as the Manassas Gap railway is running, order to be sent to the Manassas Gap, your first regiment, with two batteries, at or near the point where the railway crosses the Shenandoah. Something like two regiments of cavalry should be left in that vicinity to occupy Winchester, and Georgetown, and another body of the cavalry, and up the Shenandoah Valley, as well as through Chester Gap, which might perhaps be advantageously occupied by a detachment of infantry well entrenched. Block-houses should be built at all the railway bridges. Occupy by grand guards Warrenton junction and Warrenton itself, and also some little more advanced point on the Orange and Alexandria railroad, as soon as the railway bridge is repaired.

"Great activity should be observed by the cavalry. Beside the two regiments at Manassas, another regiment of cavalry will be at your disposal, to scout toward the Occoquan, and probably a fourth toward Leesburg.

"To recapitulate, the most important points which should engage your attention are as follows:

- "1. A strong force, well entrenched, in the vicinity of Manassas, perhaps even Georgetown, and another force, (a brigade), also well entrenched, near Strasburg.
- "2. Block houses at the railway bridges.
- "3. Constant employment of the cavalry well to the front.

"4. Grand guards at Warrenton junction and in advance as far as the Rappahannock, if possible.

"5. Great care to be exercised to obtain full and early information as to the enemy.

"6. The general object is to cover the line of the Potomac and Washington."

We all know how these prudential arrangements of Gen. McClellan were broken up by the military powers which undertook the direction of the war after he had been removed from his previous control of its operations. And since that date these prudential measures, as respects the Shenandoah Valley, have never been re-established, for no other reason, as far as we can perceive, than that to re-establish them might be construed by somebody into a tribute to Gen. McClellan's military sagacity in selecting a point of observation like Chester Gap, midway on the eastern border of the valley, where the approach of danger would be perceived in time to meet and check it at Harper's Ferry, instead of some point on the Upper Potomac, where, with such officers as the military administration habitually stations there, the approach of danger is known to the country only by a stampede of our forces from Winchester, Williamsport, or Harper's Ferry, and by a panic of the authorities in Washington, who, knowing nothing with regard to the movements or magnitude of the invading forces, fall an easy prey to every idle and vagrant rumor which vexes the atmosphere in a time of alarm and uncertainty. The unknown is always portentous. In the absence of the definite configurations revealed to the mind by assured knowledge, the startled imagination, while blindly groping in the dark, peoples all space with "gorgons, hydras, and chimeras dire." Even so brave a heart as that of King Richard, in the play of our Great Dramatist, was appalled by "shadows," as he exclaims:

"By the apostle Paul, shadows to-night
Have struck more terror to the soul of Richard
Than can the substance of ten thousand soldiers
Armed in proof."

And so, during the last few days, we have seen the Administration starting at spectres, uttering panic cries of alarm, and with its hands palsied by imaginary terrors, simply because it had neglected to take the most ordinary precautions for properly watching and occluding the Shenandoah valley. Incompetent officers have been stationed at points actually occupied, and points which should have been occupied for purposes of observation have been left without any guard whatever. Military incompetency on the Upper Potomac has been reinforced by military incompetency in Baltimore, as illustrated by Major General Lew. Wallace, who is retained in command just long enough to lose the battle of Monocacy, and then superseded by a capable officer in the field, while he is needlessly retained in command of the Department, as if only to multiply the chances of confusion by the possible intrusion of his slavery for blundering, and that too when it is no secret that

in his "civil capacity" he has, by his illegal proceedings, brought down on his head, as we understand, the gravest censure of the Attorney General of the United States.

What wonder that under such an administration of our military affairs a paltry squadron of two or three hundred bold riders can, with entire impunity, cut railroads between Harrisburg and Baltimore, and Baltimore and Philadelphia; or that a mere squad of ten men can approach within four miles of a city containing 200,000 inhabitants, garrisoned by 20,000 men, and burn at their leisure the mansion of the Governor of Maryland; or that five hundred men should, by simply sitting down before one of the forts of Washington and establishing a weak skirmish line, succeed in placing the capital of the nation under siege, cutting its telegraphic communications with Baltimore, burning the house of a cabinet minister within six miles of the city, and reducing the Government to the necessity of relying on river and sea navigation for its connections with the great North? And all this, be it remembered, happens in the fourth year of the war, with men by hundreds of thousands under arms!

And now we ask, the whole nation will ask, who is responsible for such humiliations? Is it the President, the Secretary of War, the Chief of Staff, or can it be that our military affairs are still left at such loose ends (as we know them to have been before) that sometimes one and sometimes the other of these functionaries assumes to exercise the direction of the war, selects the points of military occupation, and assigns the officers to their several commands? In the uncertainty resting on this subject we think there is no doubt about one thing, and that is, that if the President cannot discover and correct the sources of these blunders, the people in the approaching election will not be slow to discover one method by which they can put an end to this reign of military incompetence in Washington. No respect for the President's "honesty of purpose," and no admiration for the purity, intelligence, and administrative skill which they may recognise in the other Executive Departments of the Government, will stand in the way of ridding the War Department of the incubus which now visibly rests on it under its present management—making it a shame and a reproach to the nation. And in so saying we intend no particular personal allusion to Mr. Stanton, for we do not know to-day that he is responsible for these things. It may be that he confines himself strictly to the civil details of his office, and does not meddle in the matters which somebody under him or above him brings to such confusion. But we do know that somebody is responsible for the late gross malfeasance, which must ever stand in our military annals as a national disgrace, so long as posterity shall revert to the time when five hundred men laid Washington under siege for two days with ten or twenty thousand men behind its defenses! Such is the penalty which a nation pays for being ruled in any department by its ignorance rather than its intelligence.

Nor does the evil end with the disappearance of the late fight. Who, after such an exhibition of military incompetence in our councils, can repose any confidence in the military administration so long as it shall remain subject to its present directors? What security can any man feel when the watchmen from the walls of our national capital lift up their voices only to expose their own ignorance of the nature and extent of the peril from which they call the people to save them? What Governor of what State will be prompt hereafter to respond to the tap of the drum in Washington if its alarms are beaten with most vehemence when there is the least known about the necessity for disturbing the country? An immense clamor has been raised without cause during the last few days. Who is sure that while the conditions of our ignorance remain as they are, the next clamor may not come with cause, and find the War Department as little prepared to meet real danger as it has proved itself prepared to face an imaginary one? Let all loyal people lay these things to heart, but above all and first of all, let the President of the United States be assured that for these things his countrymen will hold him to a strict account, and that they will exact full atonement for the great indignity which the nation has just suffered in the eyes of the world.

The President, we know, is ambitious to earn not only the good opinions of his fellow-citizens, but also to receive their votes at the next election. If he would receive them he must be careful to deserve them; and if he should in this way vindicate his claim to the renewed confidence of the country, we are sure that we could sincerely rejoice in his success, not from any interest we take in his personal fortunes any more than in those of any other man of any other party, but because we desire the best welfare of the Republic in this day, when she requires the highest statesmanship and the most exalted capacity to conduct to a wise conclusion the affairs of the State. His merits and his pretensions are now trembling in the balance, held by the hands of a confiding and much-enduring people, who have continued long to hope against hope under the military misrule of which they are only too painfully conscious, but to the patient endurance of which there is a limit set, equally by physical necessity and by political prudence. The protraction of the war, long-drawn out by divided military councils, by injudicious civil policies, and by incompetent officers in the field, is seen by every body to be the precursor either of a Disunion peace (rendered a physical necessity by the military ineptitude which is breaking down the giant strength of the country) or of a change in the Administration which shall at least afford to the people one last hope of saving the country, where, if things remain as they are, there is now none. If the

President does not apply a corrective, at once timely and radical, to the evils of which the loyal States complain with just reason, they will not hesitate to apply the only corrective which lies within their reach, through the ballot-box.

We do not go into any inspirations of passion or partisanship. We have used earnest words because the times called for them. We suppress even the utterance of that indignation which we feel it would be righteous to cherish in view of the recent abuse of the confidence reposed by the people in their civil rulers. We speak simply as to wise men. Let wise men judge what we say, and we abide their verdict, in the full assurance that they will pronounce us to have spoken words of truth and soberness in a day when paltering and levity, whether in office or out of office, are certainly out of place.

GOVERNOR SEYMOUR.

It is known to our readers that when, in the summer of 1862, the military authorities in this city were thrown into a panic by the irruption of Gen. Jackson into the Valley of the Shenandoah, Mr. Secretary STANTON urgently called on Governor ANDREW, of Massachusetts, for a contingent of four regiments to aid in the defence of the city, believed by the Secretary to be in imminent peril from the threatened movement. Governor ANDREW replied that, after what Massachusetts had done, this "sudden call" was a "heavy draught" upon her patriotism, but he would see what could be done, but it would take time to organize and muster the required regiments. In the same reply he stated, after these "but," that "if" the Administration would only change its policy on the slavery question, and permit the "Massachusetts boys" to "fire on the enemy's magazine"—that is, attack slavery directly—why then "the streets and lanes of Massachusetts would swarm with willing recruits."

We did not hesitate at the time to hold up this conduct of the Governor of Massachusetts to the condemnation it deserved. It mattered not that the peril against which the Secretary of War called him to guard the National Capital was then, as recently, more chimerical than real. Governor ANDREW could not know this, and, least of all, could he venture to act on the presumption. And yet, in the face of the nation, he practically ignored the Secretary's call, and engaged in a parley for the purpose of dictating terms on which the Government might expect to receive the prompt and hearty support of Massachusetts in the defence of the National Capital. For this conduct we blamed him.

A few days ago, when, with the lights before us, it seemed that Governor Seymour, of New York, had not manifested a becoming alacrity in responding to the call recently made on him for 12,000 men, we did not hesitate to express the censure which we thought appropriate. We are not pledged to find Governors or men of one party always in the right, and Governors or men of another party always in the wrong. Though, even on the facts then before us, Governor Seymour had not shown a delinquency at all comparable in kind or degree with that of the Governor of Massachusetts two years ago, we thought he had, in a measure, subjected himself to the same kind of condemnation, and we therefore made no discrimination in his favor.

It now appears to us, however, that the conduct of Gov. Seymour in the late supposed emergency was not justly open to the full weight of the censure we brought against it. It appears that the internal police of New York city requires for the protection of order the constant presence of a large proportion of the organized and uniformed militia. Such is the common opinion of Mayor Gunther, and of Maj. Gen. Sanford, the commander of the city militia. The latter concurs with the former in the opinion that prudence requires the retention of the greater part of this organized militia in the city, and it may be that under such circumstances it would have been injudicious in Gov. Seymour to draw on the city for the whole of the twelve thousand men asked for by the President, to say nothing of the inequality to which such an exaction must have subjected the city as compared with other portions of the State. It appears from the statement of Gen. Sanford, to which we refer the reader in another column, (where this subject is presented in the light of official papers,) that after furnishing thirty-five hundred men as the quota of the city under the call for twelve thousand men, he could command the services of only twelve disciplined regiments to restore order in case of a riot—a number deemed by him sufficient for this purpose, but which would have been reduced to a mere handful if the entire quota had been filled from this force the only requisition of the President. The New York Evening Post remarks on this subject as follows:

"It may be true, as the World says, that Mayor Gunther is alarmed without reason for the peace of the city, but it is none the less true that with a large, idle, and to some extent dissolute population, whose fears and passions are perpetually addressed by the interested agents of the rebellion, he cannot be too prudent. We do not suppose that the terrible scenes of last year, of which this week is the anniversary, are likely to be renewed; such events are not apt to occur twice in an age; and if they should occur again, the police, the national authorities, and the citizens generally are so much better prepared to meet them than they were then, that those scenes cannot be reproduced with the same malignity and destructiveness. But we do not wish to see them even attempted; and if by retaining our militia regiments at home—that is, not all of them, but the older regiments, which we believe is the design—the attempt can be prevented, Mayor Gunther's suggestions are both well grounded, timely, and judicious."

In proportion to the real grounds for such apprehensions, the conduct of Governor Seymour in the premises may have been prudent and proper.

The Hon. JAMES F. SIMMONS, formerly a Senator in Congress from the State of Rhode Island, died at his residence in that State on Thursday last, in the 60th year of his age. He was twice elected to the Senate—first, for the term commencing in March, 1841, as the successor of Mr. Knight, and again in 1857, as the successor of Mr. James

OUR MILITIA SYSTEM.

The late successful invasion of Maryland by Gen. Early, and the demonstrated incapacity of the military administration to protect the Loyal States against such incursions, is held by many of our Republican contemporaries to impose on those States the duty of at once efficiently organizing their militia system, that they may at all times be in a condition to defend themselves from such predatory incursions, which are as costly to the plundered States as they are mortifying to the nation. To this effect the New York Evening Post says:

"As for Washington, only a large army can take it, or Baltimore—both carefully and scientifically surrounded with defenses, and containing each several thousands of militia; and if we must keep the Army of the Potomac to protect the border, instead of doing it by State militia, we shall be the laughing stock of the world."

Our militia is not properly drilled, it is true; but it can and ought to be, and we hope hereafter it will be. There are persons who bear a heavy burden of responsibility, and they are the State Legislators and executives. There is Pennsylvania almost without militia; there is New York, with 400,000 fighting men enrolled, and yet but 30,000 of organized militia. We have had a state for two years now upwards providing for the enrolment of all these men, and the organization and equipment of as many as the Governor may think necessary, 125,000 being the minimum count-estimated. Can Gov. Morgan or Gov. Seymour tell us why this law has not been executed? If it had been, we could ourselves have made an end of the incursion by putting forth a small portion of our strength.

"The supineness, we had almost said the stolidity of the State authorities regarding the embodiment of the militia surpasses all belief. We are wholly unable to account for it on any theory connected with patriotism and common sense. We had all the materials at hand; our safety and our honor required that they should be used. The neglect to use them has brought upon us this fresh disgrace, and we know not how much deeper."

What is now to be done? Retrieve the fault as quickly as possible. Arm the whole of our militia without delay. Not a day should be lost. And in the mean time the people every where should make up by voluntary associations, as far as possible, for the remissness of their public servants."

Of like purport are the following observations of the Boston Daily Advertiser:

"A raid into Maryland would not be lightly undertaken if it were known that we had 100,000 men, armed and trained in the elements of military movements, within forty-eight hours distance of any threatened point of importance, as we might have, if the several States were to do their duty. As it now stands, the inactivity of the State Governments in this respect invites attack. The campaign opens with a respectable force of United States troops protecting the line. As the campaign goes on that force weakens, and in drawn away to other points of duty. As it now stands, the inactivity of the State Governments in this respect invites attack. The campaign opens with a respectable force of United States troops protecting the line. As the campaign goes on that force weakens, and in drawn away to other points of duty. As it now stands, the inactivity of the State Governments in this respect invites attack. The campaign opens with a respectable force of United States troops protecting the line. 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